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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000772

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TAGS: PGOV KPKO MOPS CG

SUBJECT: ITURI UPDATE: MILITIA ATTACK FARDC POSITIONS IN  
NIOKA

REF: KINSHASA 762

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Militias believed to be associated with Peter Karim and the Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC) May 13-14 attacked positions of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) near the town of Nioka (approximately 50 miles northeast of Bunia). According to FARDC spokesman Capt. Olivier Mputu, the militia launched their attack on the FARDC the evening of May 13 and were repelled after an hours-long firefight. Mputu said the militia attacked again the following day and were again pushed back by Congolese troops. Mputu told PolOff May 15 some sporadic fighting is still being reported around Nioka. (Note: The fighting in Nioka is not a planned element of Operation Ituri Ember, reftel, which is concentrated further south. End note.)

¶2. (C) MONUC military officials report the area around Nioka has been brought under control of the FARDC, and the Congolese appear to be holding their positions. MONUC will be transporting additional ammunition to the FARDC troops in Nioka May 15 and is deploying a patrol of MONUC peacekeepers to help secure the area. MONUC sources report that while fighting was apparently heavy between the militia and the FARDC, there are not as yet any reliable casualty figures. Mputu told PolOff the bodies of two militia members had been recovered while one FARDC soldier was killed in the fighting. Initial reports from Nioka indicated around 50 militia forces had been killed, but more recent estimates place militia casualties closer to 25 killed.

¶3. (C) Comment: While this is only one engagement, the FARDC's conduct in the fight against the MRC in Nioka is nonetheless encouraging. The FARDC, the target of a militia-initiated attack, was able to hold its ground and repel the militia without substantial MONUC logistical support and planning. End comment.

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